

# HERE'S my STORY

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## THE RUSTY MEZUZAH

MRS. JEANETTE NEPPE



**Cindy Diamond during her My Encounter interview.**

The story I am about to tell begins in Johannesburg, where I lived with my late husband, David Neppe — who served for a time as the mayor of the city — and our two children Cliff and Cindy.

It happened a week before Cindy's thirteenth birthday in April of 1983. We had just returned from a mother-daughter shopping trip, and Cindy plopped down in a chair to watch TV, when I heard her call out, "Mommy!" (She later said that she suddenly felt strange.) I walked into the room and I got the fright of my life — she was sitting there totally rigid and seemingly unconscious. My husband wasn't home so I summoned Cliff, who picked her up and carried her to the car, and we drove as fast as possible to the hospital which was just up the road.

When we arrived there, she came to and asked, "Why did you bring me here?"

She was examined in the emergency room, and after some tests, a neurosurgeon was called in to consult. The neurosurgeon ordered a biopsy of her brain in order

to determine what was going on. That was easier said than done — the fact that they didn't want to sedate her fully, made things quite complicated. Her movements caused problems with the equipment they were using, and the procedure, which had been expected to take forty minutes, dragged on for a full six hours.

After all that, they informed us of their terrible diagnosis: Cindy had an inoperable brain tumor, and radiation coupled with chemotherapy was the only available treatment. Even that offered very little hope; she was probably going to die.

We came home and, in distress, I phoned my very good friend Shirley Resnick, who immediately said that we must seek a blessing for recovery from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. She got a hold of Rabbi Moshe Doman, who contacted New York. The response came quickly — the Rebbe sent his blessing, along with a message to have the *mezuzot* of our house checked and to keep him informed of what is happening.

Rabbi Doman did the checking. The first *mezuzah* he checked was the one on our front door. As he opened it up, we saw the *mezuzah* case had rusted so badly that the scroll was damaged. In the last verse — which reads, "And you are to write them on the doorposts of your home and your gateways, in order to prolong your days and the days of your children..." — the word "children" had been obliterated. Rabbi Doman found this highly significant because, he explained, this verse indicates that "G-d will bring life to your children, your sons and your daughters, yet that very word is covered with rust."

Of course, we had new *mezuzah* scrolls put up immediately. But we were still very worried about the recommended treatment. Meanwhile, Cindy had been

*continued on reverse*



EVENTS. IDEAS.  
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Marking 70 years from the anniversary of the Rebbe's leadership, each week, JEM will be focusing on one event, idea or personality in the Rebbe's life.



continued from reverse

put on cortisone, a steroid drug, and she had blown up like a balloon.

At the time, my late brother was living in Canada and he urged us to come there to have Cindy evaluated at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Since the doctors in Johannesburg were not holding out much hope, Cindy and I got on a plane to Canada. Once there, the doctors examined the scans and tissue slides from the brain biopsy which had been done in Johannesburg, and gave me the unbelievable news: "There is nothing here."

"But I had not one but two neurosurgeons in South Africa tell me that my daughter has an inoperable tumor in her brain!" I exclaimed.

"We are just telling you what we see," they said, speculating that perhaps Cindy had had a mild infection, but there were absolutely no sign of a malignancy and no treatment was needed.

Needless to say, while I was overjoyed to hear this, I had to be absolutely sure. I wasn't going to just take their word for it after receiving such a dramatically different diagnosis from other doctors.

Searching for yet another opinion, I contacted a doctor at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, which is about a three-hour drive from Toronto. I brought all the scans and slides with me, as he instructed, and after he examined everything, he also said the same thing the doctors in Toronto had said, "There is nothing here." He added, "My recommendation is that you stop the cortisone gradually and go home."

When I got back to Toronto, I immediately called New York. I had been keeping the Rebbe's secretariat advised of everything that was going on, just as he had asked. Now, I asked for an audience with the Rebbe; I felt it was important for Cindy and me to see him before flying back to South Africa. A private audience was not possible, but we were told that we would be able to see the Rebbe with a group of people.

We flew to New York and waited, along with many others, for the Rebbe to come out. I managed to push Cindy to the front and I stood there with her. He looked

at us with his bright blue eyes, and I got very emotional. Then he gave both of us money for charity and he also issued a general blessing to the entire group. Cindy later said that when he looked at her, she felt his eyes pierced right down to her very soul and that it was the most memorable experience of her life.

When we returned home, I went back to see the neurosurgeon who had initially diagnosed Cindy and told him she would not be undergoing any treatment. His exact words to me were: "I hope you don't eat your words." Thank G-d, I never had to.

As a precaution, we had Cindy checked regularly — every few years, she had brain scans done. And each time, Dr. Charles Kaplan, who became her neurologist, would say to me, "She's a miracle child."

Clearly, the doctors in Johannesburg had misdiagnosed her, and had she undergone a course of radiation and chemotherapy, she might have suffered brain damage and possibly died. But from the moment of the Rebbe's blessing and his instruction to check our *mezuzot*, everything changed course.

*Mrs. Jeanette Neppe and her daughter Mrs. Cindy Neppe Diamond were interviewed in Johannesburg in January of 2015.*

## This week in....

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשינ

> **5741 - 1981**, the Rebbe spoke out against a "bizarre notion" that was being advanced by influential Jewish organizations and leaders in the Israeli government. They were pushing for the humanitarian aid that was being given to Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union to be withheld from those who would settle outside of Israel. The Rebbe refuted the specific reasons that were given in support of this policy and said, "For over fifty years, these Jews have lived under an oppressive regime with no personal freedom. And now that they have finally gotten out, there is another attempt to force a particular worldview on them ... Clearly, settling the land of Israel is important ... but the way to go about it is not through coercion."<sup>1</sup>  
27 Av

1. Sichot Kodesh 5741 vol. 4 page 508

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